181

Mr. *Foxcroft's* Sermon

Upon the

SUDDEN DEATH

Of the Reverend

Mr. *Williams* and Mr. *Blowers.*

Mr. Foxcroft's Sermon

Upon the

SUDDEN DEATH

of

Mr. William [illegible] Mr. Bloomers.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Eli *the Priest dying Suddenly.*

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the Thurſday-Lecture in *Boſton*, *June* 19. 1729.

Upon Occaſion of the

Sudden Death

Of the Reverend

Mr. *John Williams*, who died *June* 12*th* In the 65th Year of his Age.

And of the Reverend

Mr. *Thomas Blowers*, who died *June* 17*th* In the 52d Year of his Age.

By THOMAS FOXCROFT M. A.
Paſtor to the old Church in *Boſton*.

Matth. 24 45, 46. *Who then is a faithful and wiſe ſervant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his houſhold, to give them meat in due ſeaſon? Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing.*

BOSTON, N. E.
Printed for S. GERRISH in Cornhil.
M DCC XXIX.

BRITISH MUSEUM

To the HONORABLE

Samuel Sewall Eſq.

Late of his MAJESTY's *Council*, for the Province of the *Maſſachuſetts-Bay* &c.

Honored SIR,

IT being more eſpecially in Obedience to your Deſire, that the following Sermon is put to the Preſs, I humbly beg Leave to make a Dedication of it to you in particular: And I preſume it cannot be unpleaſing to you to have the precious Names of WILLIAMS & BLOWERS thus joyned with yours in theſe mournful Papers.

IT is a freſh Inſtance of your Affection & Reſpect to thoſe Reverend and worthy Men, that you can't content your ſelf with the moſt plentiful Tears over their Grave, but are deſirous alſo of erecting ſome durable Monument, to honour and preſerve their Memory, and to be a Teſtimony of your ſincere Condolence with the bereaved Relatives. Upon which Occaſion, SIR, allow me to ſay, Bleſſed be He of the LORD, which hath not left off his Kindneſs to the Living and to the Dead!

IT might be expected, that I ſhould have gone more particularly into the diſtinct Characters of the Men of GOD, whoſe ſudden Death has put us into ſuch univerſal Mourning: And I ſuppoſe I might have expatiated here with as much Inoffenſiveneſs, as in the moſt unexceptionable Caſe we have known. But the Straits of Time oblig'd me to be ſhort, and

therefore

therefore forbad my going into ſeparate Deſcriptions, that would neceſſarily have carry'd me out to an immoderate Length; And then I concluded more full Accounts would be given the Publick by better hands: Which I think may be accepted as a juſt Apology for my Silence in many Things, that might ſeem proper to have been mention'd of the Deceaſed, in Juſtice to their Merits.

WHEN I ſtudy'd the Diſcourſe, I had little Expectation of its being put in Print: And a plain unadorn'd Dreſs being moſt ſutable to a Funeral-Occaſion, I have let it go abroad in its firſt familiar Stile, without thoſe Corrections which otherwiſe might have appear'd neceſſary.

PERMIT me, SIR, *to obſerve, that as it is my profeſs'd governing Aim in all my preaching to be inſtructive and profitable; ſo it gives me ſome Hope of this Sermon's being calculated in ſome meaſure to ſerve the beſt Ends, that you have been pleas'd to entertain the Opinion of it as to deſire a Copy for the publick Light: Which, I muſt confeſs, has appear'd ſufficient to ſatisfy me, whatever Cenſures from others may happen, that I have done well to conſent to this Publication, when I could not with any Modeſty deny your Requeſt.*

I wiſh, SIR, *it may any way anſwer the pious Ends you have had in View ---: And I truſt however that you will accept my Compliance as an Inſtance of that unfeigned Reſpect, with which I am always,*

SIR,

Your very obedient

and affectionate

Servant in CHRIST

Thomas Foxcroft.

Eli *the Prieſt dying Suddenly.*

I SAMUEL IV. 18.

AND it came to paſs, when he made mention of the Ark of God, that he fell from off the Seat --- and-died.

THIS Book contains the hiſtory of the two laſt of the Judges, *Eli* and *Samuel*, who were not like the reſt, Men of War, but Clergymen, of the Tribe of *Levi*: The latter a Prophet; the former, *High Prieſt* over the Houſe of God. The hiſtorical paſſage I have red to you is concerning *Eli*: and gives us an Account of his ſudden Death at an advanced Age, with the melancholy Occaſion of it.

IN the foregoing part of the Chapter we are told of *Iſrael*'s Diſgrace & Defeat in a Rencounter with the *Philiſtines*. The Iſraelitiſh Forces were intirely put to the Rout; Thirty thouſand kill'd in Battel, among whom were *Hophni* and *Phinehas*, the two Sons of *Eli*; and the Ark of GOD was taken, in which they carnally truſted, that it ſhould ſave them, altho' GOD was in an awful manner departed from them.

A Man out of the Army, which the Jews fancy was *Saul*, poſted away immediately to tell the ſorrowful News. He came to *Shiloh* the ſame day: And lo, *Eli* the Prieſt ſat upon a Seat by the way-ſide, *watching* to hear what Tidings; *for his Heart trembled for the Ark of GOD.* He was in pain to know what was become of the Ark of the Covenant of GOD, the viſible Symbol of GOD's Preſence with *Iſrael*; which his Sons had fetch'd out of *Shiloh*, and carry'd forth into the Camp. This was what employ'd his ſollicitous Thoughts at that critical Juncture; this lay with moſt weight upon his Spirit, & ſwallow'd up all private and leſſer Cares. And hence while the Meſſenger was relating to him the Iſſue of the Battel, " he did not interrupt the Narrative with any paſſionate Lamentations for his Sons, like *David* for *Abſalom*; but waits for the End of the Story ", expecting an Account of the Ark. " And if he cou'd but have heard that the Ark was ſafe & coming home to *Shiloh*, his Joy for that wou'd have overcome his Grief for all the other Diſaſters, & have made him eaſy: But when the Man came to that part of his Story, *And the Ark of GOD is taken*, *Eli* was inſtantly ſtruck to the Heart ". The trembling aged Prieſt cou'd not ſtand the Shock of this amazing News, but fainted away, and there was no more ſpirit in him. He ſank down, & fell off his Seat; died ſoon, and never ſpake more.

From the Text, taken in its Connexion with the foregoing Story, we might obſerve a Variety of profitable Leſſons here taught us: But I ſhall confine my ſelf to two or three Obſervations, as moſt agreable to my preſent Deſign, & the melancholy Occaſions of this Diſcourſe. --- We receiv'd

ceiv'd on Monday laſt the ſorrowful Tidings of the ſudden Death of the Reverend Mr. JOHN WILLIAMS, the aged Paſtor of the Church in *Deerfield*, and Yeſterday brought us the ſurprizing News of the ſudden Death alſo of the Rev. Mr. THOMAS BLOWERS, Paſtor of the firſt Church in *Beverly*. ---- This double Stroke of GOD's bereaving Hand is very awful, & affords a juſt Occaſion for the Diſcourſe before us: Which I ſhall endeavour with Divine Help to accommodate in ſome meaſure to thoſe mournful Providences; to lead us into proper Sentiments upon ſuch lamentable Bereavemen, and a right Application of them.

MY firſt Obſervation may be this, ----

DOCT. I. *WHEN the* Cauſe *of GOD and his Church is under a threatning* Cloud, *it is ſometimes an awful Circumſtance attending a People, that their* Gapmen, *and the Pillars of the Land, are removed by Death.*

THE Cauſe of GOD and *Iſrael* was under a Cloud, a dark and menacing Cloud, on various Accounts, when *Eli* (a Man of Prayer, & a Man of Influence) was taken away by Death. It was a Time of great Degeneracy & great Diſtreſs among the People of GOD. The *Jews* had provoked GOD by their Sins, to give up their Army to the Power of the Philiſtine Enemy; ſo that there was a very great Slaughter, and the Ark it ſelf was taken & carry'd away to *Aſhdod*, where it was plac'd in *Dagon*'s Temple, probably in honour to this their god, as a Trophy & Memorial of their Victory over the Iſraelites. The Loſs of the Ark was a Calamity & Reproach to

the whole Land, but to *Shiloh* more especially; whose Ruine may be dated from this fatal Day, when the Ark, which had long abode in that City, fell into the hands of the *Philistines*. The Glory now departed from them; GOD forsook the Tabernacle of *Shiloh*, where he set his Name at the first; because it was become a Den of Robbers, and polluted with great Wickedness ||.

Now, at such a calamitous Juncture, when *Israel* was smitten, *Shiloh* forsaken, the *Ark* gone, and Religion in an expiring Posture; when the Glory of *Israel* was expos'd to Blasphemies and Insults in the Streets of *Askelon*, and there appears to have been but little Spirit for the Cause and Work of GOD, to redeem his Ark out of the hand of the Enemy, & revive dying Religion in the Land; now was *Eli*, the Servant of GOD, who might have stood in the Gap to turn away Wrath from his People, taken from their Head.

And this has been the Manner of Divine Providence, in dealing with the People of GOD, thro' all Ages: When they have provoked him, by their growing Wickedness and Impenitence under his Judgments, he has usually proceeded to further Expressions of his Anger; and as one very significant Token thereof, He uses to multiply publick Losses and Bereavements among an incorrigible People, in taking away eminently good & useful Persons, who are the Strength of a Place; the Chariots of Israel & the Horsemen thereof.

The Death of the Righteous is in it self a publick Judgment; especially the Death of more eminently pious and serviceable Men. In be-

|| *Jer.* 7,

reaving

reaving *Jeruſalem* of ſuch, GOD is ſaid to take away from her *the Stay and the Staff*, Iſa. 3. 1. It's as it were a plucking up the Stakes, which ſupport the Hedge; or as a pulling down the Pillars, that keep up the Building. It's as a rooting up the beſt Plants out of the Garden, or cutting down the moſt uſeful Trees. --- Hence when ſuch are remov'd, the bereav'd *Families* often, and the bereav'd *Towns* or *Churches* ſometimes, find it no eaſy thing to hold up their head, and maintain the Figure they us'd to make among the Tribes of *Iſrael*. The very Preſence of good Men is a Bleſſing to the Country, & contributes not a little to the Glory and Safety of the Places where they dwell. They ſhine as Lights in the World; and ſerve their Generation, by their Examples, by their Prayers, by their Counſels and Inſtructions, and a Variety of Services, in which they make a diligent Application of their Talents, Gifts, Graces, Influences, Authority, and worldly Eſtate, to the wiſeſt & beſt Ends. Therefore, when ſuch Men die, it's a great Loſs & Breach upon a People: So many Jewels are bury'd; ſo much of their Honour is laid in the duſt; & their they Strength weaken'd in the way. GOD intimates his Diſpleaſure at a People, in very affecting Accents, when he cauſes godly faithful Men to ceaſe out of the Earth by Mortality: And he expects that Survivers lay to heart ſuch awakning Strokes of his bereaving Hand.

They have eſpecial Reaſon to do ſo, when it is a Day of Rebuke with them on other Accounts likewiſe. When the Cauſe & Church of GOD are under a threatning Cloud; the Enemy coming in as a Flood, like to run away with the

Ark, and ruine a People in their moſt valuable Intereſts; it muſt needs be an awful Circumſtance, to have thoſe fall by Death at the ſame time, who (were they ſpar'd) wou'd lift up a Standard, and zealouſly employ their beſt Skill and Power to skreen off imminent Deſtruction. When the Walls are broken down, and the Defenſe gone, what an Inundation of Wickedneſs, what a Torrent of Miſeries, will flow in upon a deſerted Place! When a People are brought low for their Iniquities, by one Judgment & another; *now* to have their faithful praying Worthies (for whoſe ſake GOD ſpares a ſinful World) removed by Death, this is a heavy *additional* Judgment, and ſore *Aggravation* of all their other Calamities. When GOD takes away thoſe that us'd to ſtand in the Gap, and make up the Breach, in a time of Trouble, it looks with an *ominous* Aſpect, as if he meant to lay his Vineyard waſte, and was bringing on an utter Deſolation. Unto his Children and Servants trembling for the Ark of GOD, that ſeems to be the Language of Providence in taking them away, 2 Chron. 34. 27,28. where GOD ſays to good *Joſiah*, *Becauſe thine Heart was tender, and thou didſt humble thy ſelf before GOD, when thou heardſt his Words againſt this Place; --- Behold, I will gather thee to thy Fathers, to thy Grave in Peace: Neither ſhall thine Eyes ſee all the Evil that I will bring upon this Place.*

Upon the whole, What Reaſon then have we in this Land to bewail the Removal of ſo many good and uſeful Men, praying Saints, & ſhining Lights, as are from time to time falling in our *Iſrael*. GOD has been viſiting us with a Variety of ſhaking Diſpenſations, & the Face of Providence toward

toward us at this Day, is on ſeveral Accounts full of Terror: So that all who have any Intereſt in Heaven had need lay out Faith & Prayer to the utmoſt, for the reſcuing a degenerate People from impending Ruine. But alas! how great is the Scarcity of real Saints in our Day! The Prophet complain'd in his time that they were as the *Gleanings of the Vintage*, Mic. 7. 1. So the Pſalmiſt, Pſalm 12. 1. *The godly Man ceaſeth, the Faithful fail from among the Children of Men.* And ſurely in our Day, tho' there be Multitudes of Profeſſors, yet 'tis to be fear'd that the Number of *genuine* & *true* Profeſſors, real living Chriſtians, is comparatively ſmall. They then of this happy Character, that are remov'd, can but very ill be ſpared at ſuch a critical Seaſon. It is truly a Time of *Jacob*'s Trouble; & whoſe Heart, that hath any Tenderneſs in it, doth not *tremble for the Ark of GOD?* How awful then muſt the Diſpenſation of Heaven appear to us, in taking away the Friends of our *Zion* by repeated Deaths, at ſuch a Juncture! Is not Religion ſadly upon the declining Hand? Is not Sin getting head apace? Are not the riſing Generation among us under lamentable Symptoms? How alſo are they increaſed that trouble us? And muſt we at the ſame time be depriv'd, by angry Death, of our beſt Friends, our trueſt Patriots, and moſt powerful Guardians, the *Saints* of GOD, who are the very Breath of our Noſtrils: *The holy Seed, which are the Subſtance* ||, the Strength and Beauty of Iſrael! Have we not loſt many both in private and publick Stations? "Hath not the Hand of the Lord been upon us, in many Con-

|| *Iſa.* 6. 13.

gregations

gregations theſe ſeveral Years; not in favour, to weed out the worſt; but we fear, in diſpleaſure to gather the ripeſt? "Hath he not ſmitten at the Chief, and taken the beſt, both of a public and private Character? And ſtill we are upon the loſing hand". This is for a Lamentation, & ſhall be for a Lamentation. It wou'd be *Stupidity* †, not to reſent the awful Breaches made upon us, eſpecially in the Death of ſeveral of our more excellent Worthies; by whoſe Fall the whole Land is ſhaken. We may juſtly complain and ſhould ſeek to GOD, in the Pſalmiſt's Language, Pſal. 12. 1. *Help, Lord, for the godly Man ceaſeth.* And as the Prophet, Amos 7. 5. *Ceaſe, Lord; by whom ſhall* Jacob *ariſe? For he is ſmall.*

But I paſs now to another Obſervation,

Doct. II. *THE moſt holy Prieſts and* Miniſters *of GOD are ſubject to* Mortality, *in common with others.*

This Obſervation is drawn from the Character of *Eli*; who miniſtred unto the Lord in the *Prieſt's* Office, and who (altho' blam'd for his too great Indulgence to his Children, yet) was a faithful and holy Man of GOD; an Iſraelite indeed; one that truly fear'd the Lord, and trembled for the Ark of GOD. But notwithſtanding his eminent Station, his worthy Character, & venerable Age; Death, that common and implacable Enemy of Mankind, who ſpares none, aſſaulted him, & brought him down to the Houſe appointed for all Living.

† *Iſai.* 57. 1.

Truly

Truly all Fleſh is Graſs, and the Glory of Man periſhes as the Flower of the Field. Death reigns thro'out the animal World: Yet it's well this *Earth* only is the Stage of Mortality. The upper Regions are not within the Limits of Death's Dominion. Angels do not die; being free from all the Cauſes of Mortality, and from the Sentence of Death. But this lower World, which is full of Sin, is alſo full of Deaths and Miſeries. And even ſuch as are not *of* this World, yet being *in* it, have their Share with others in the common Calamities of the preſent State. The Saints, tho' *Angels* in fleſh, fall undiſtinguiſh'd by the hand of Death; they die as other Men, and lie down alike in the Duſt. Pſalm 49. 10. *We ſee that wiſe men die; likewiſe the Fool, and the brutiſh Perſon periſh.* There have been but two Exceptions, that we know of, from the beginning to this Day, namely *Enoch* and *Elias*; who were tranſlated without ſeeing Death. Indeed, conſider Death under the Notion merely of a *Departure* out of this World, into a future inviſible State, and in this ſenſe even *they* alſo may be ſaid to have ſeen Death. But conſider it as a *Diſſolution* of the Body, and it has been the univerſal Lot of all Mankind beſide thro'out all Ages; even the beſt and greateſt not exempted. Zech. 1. 5. *Your Fathers where are they? and the Prophets, do they live for ever?* The Patriarchs, Prophets, Prieſts, & Saints under the old Teſtament, *theſe all died* in Faith. The Apoſtle obſerves concerning the levitical Prieſts, that they were *many*, becauſe they were not ſuffer'd to continue by reaſon of *Death*, *Heb.* 7. 23. Neither are the Miniſters of Christ under the Goſpel-Diſpenſation, exempted from the

the Stroke of Death; even the *Apoſtles* themſelves, tho' their Office was ſo high & honorable, and their Character ſo exalted, yet found theſe things wou'd not protect them from the hand of the Grave. Indeed concerning *John*, the longeſt Liver of the Apoſtles, there went once this Saying abroad among the Brethren, That that Diſciple ſhould not die; ---- grounded upon a Notion, as if Jesus had ſaid of him, *He ſhall not die*: But 'twas a Miſtake. And the Event, as Hiſtory informs, ſhewed that Chriſt had ſaid no other to *John*, than what he ſaid to *Peter*, That he muſt *put off his Tabernacle*, and die even as others.

There are in general, the ſame common Grounds & Reaſons of the Mortality of Miniſters, tho' the brighteſt Saints, as of other Men: And there are ſpecial Reaſons, that affect only themſelves.

The natural Cauſes of Death equally extend to them: And the meritorious Cauſe reaches them, as well as others, which is primarily indwelling Sin. They are alſo comprehended under the general Decree or Sentence of temporal Death: Which tho' eventually, as to them, not a Curſe, but a Bleſſing; the Sting of Death being remov'd, and the ſecond Death having no power to hurt them; yet 'tis a ſad *Memorial* of the primitive Curſe, and a ſtanding Teſtimony againſt the primitive Rebellion; a ſharp Affliction, deſign'd by infinite Wiſdom & Grace for the like holy and bleſſed Ends, as the Calamities of Life, to the Servants of Chriſt.

There is the *Sovereignty* of GOD to be ſeen in continuing the Law of Mortality in force, even as to his own Children and Servants; notwithſtanding

ſtanding their Redemption by Chriſt from ſpiritual Death and from the Wrath to come. In laying out the Plan & Method of our Salvation, the glorious GOD exerciſed an uncontroulable and abſolute Liberty; projecting all things according to the Counſel of his own Will: And it pleaſed the ſovereign Lord of Life to determine and appoint, concerning his People; as, that their Sanctification in this World ſhou'd not be completed at once, but gradually carry'd on, amidſt a Variety of temporal Wants & Trials; ſo, that their Glorification in the next ſhou'd not be perfected without the Intervention of temporal Death.

This tends to put a Luſtre on the rectoral *Holineſs* of GOD, and to magnify his *Juſtice* in the Eyes of Sinners: For, if the righteous, if the very holieſt Miniſters of Chriſt, are ſcarcely ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly appear? If this be done in the green Tree, what ſhall become of the dry? Surely the Sinners in *Zion* may well be afraid, and Fearfulneſs arreſt the Hypocrites, when they ſee GOD's moſt eminent Saints and Servants falling by the Stroke of Death.

Again, By dying, the Man of GOD is made *conformable* to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: And ſhould there not be a Correſpondence between the Members and the Head? Shall not the Servant be content to be as his Maſter?

The *Proſpect* of dying is a powerful Incentive with us to a daily Care of living to GOD, doing good, and preparing for Eternity: And this alſo draws out the Hearts of Miniſters in Compaſſion to others in their dying hours.

Again, In dying, how often do the *Graces* of the Man of GOD ſhine out and diſplay themſelves, in

ſervent Prayers, heavenly Diſcourſes, and ſignal Triumphs over Temptations!

Moreover, By their dying & putting off the Body, *Way* is made for the ſtupendous Glory of a future *Reſurrection*; in which amazing Event GOD will diſplay his Wiſdom, his Power, and Mercy, to the univerſal Admiration of Spectators; who ſhall behold Mortality ſwallow'd up of Life, and ſee them that have been wiſe to win Souls *ſhining* as the Brightneſs of the Firmament, and them that have turn'd many to Righteouſneſs, as the *Stars for ever and ever* ||.

In a word, The Mortality of GOD's faithful Miniſters contributes to his Honour, as it ſhews that the whole Glory of their Succeſs in the Work of the Goſpel is to be refer'd to the Divine Bleſſing. Hence that of the Apoſtle, 2 Cor. 4. 7, 11. *But we have this Treaſure in earthen Veſſels, that the excellency of the Power may be of GOD, and not of us.---For we which live, are always delivered unto Death for Jeſus ſake, that the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in our mortal Fleſh.* And as it is an Argument or Motive to excite Faith & Dependence upon GOD in their Work. 2 Cor. 1. 9. *But we had the Sentence of Death in our ſelves, that we ſhould not truſt in our ſelves, but in God, which raiſeth the Dead.*

Thus conſidering Death as a *Diſſolution* of the Body, you ſee it, in the Caſe of good Men, over-rul'd to ſerve very excellent Purpoſes.

And if Death be conſider'd in the other Notion, as a *Departure* of the Soul out of the World, and Diſmiſſion from this earthly Stage, there are alſo ſpecial Reaſons to be aſſign'd for this Diſpenſation to the Servants of GOD.

|| *Dan.* 12. 3.

Thus

Thus, They are taken out of the World, that they may *reſt from their Labours*; ſee an End of their Griefs, Fears, Cares, & Temptations, and *receive the Rewards* of Divine Grace in an eternal State of perfect Holineſs and uninterrupted Happineſs. In the firy Chariot of Death, every faithful Miniſter and Saint of the moſt High aſcends with *Elijah*, and is tranſlated with *Enoch*, unto the World of Spirits; to joyn with Angels in the moſt happy Employments, and ſhare with them in the ineffable Joys of that Divine Preſence, which is the peculiar Glory of the heavenly Country. ---- Under this Notion, Death is a deſirable *Good*, to the faithful Miniſter. Hence the Apoſtle expreſs'd himſelf in that glorious Language of Faith, Phil. 1. 23. *Having a Deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt; which is by far much better.* See alſo 2 *Tim.* 4. 6, 7, 8.

It is an Act of *Mercy* and Favour in GOD towards his Servants, to take them out of this World, and from a State of ſuffering, ſinning and temptation: Eſpecially it is ſo, when any peculiar Storm of Temptations or Judgments is coming on the Place where they dwell.

[Agreably I am told, One of the Men of GOD, whoſe Death we are lamenting †, had this remarkable Expreſſion, in his late Viſit to a ſick Brother in *Roxbury*, "Come, Brother, it's a "good Time to die in; when there's ſuch a "dark Day haſtning on poor *New-England*.]

It is mention'd as a ſpecial Act of Divine Tenderneſs to *Joſiah*, that he ſhou'd be gather'd to his Fathers in Peace, and his Eyes ſhou'd not ſee all the Evil, which GOD was about to bring

† Mr. *Williams*.

upon *Jerusalem* ----. The Righteous are said to be taken away *from the Evil to come*; that they might not have any Share in the common Calamities, nor be capable of having their Hearts broke with prevailing Grief on the Account of them. Therefore in Compassion GOD removes them out of the Way.

Again, MINISTERS having done their Work, Die, to *make Room for others*, to come and act their part on the Publick Stage. *Aaron* was remov'd to make way for *Eleazar*, and *Eli* resign'd his Post to *Samuel*. God displays his infinite Fulness, Power, & Grace, in carrying on his Work by a Variety of successive Instruments.

IN a word, GOD sometimes removes his faithful Ministers in Testimony of his *Displeasure* at a *Place* or *People*: tho' in Mercy to themselves, yet in Judgment to Survivers; who shou'd look upon the Dispensation of Providence, in removing their faithful Teachers, as a Frown upon them, and consider their Sins as exposing them to such an awakning Rebuke of Heaven. It's to be fear'd that a People do often *sin away* the Blessing of a faithful Ministry; by over-valuing and placing a carnal Confidence & Pride in it, or else by despising & rejecting it: Either of which may justly provoke a holy and jealous GOD to lay them under a sorrowful Bereavement, and to write upon the Tombs of the Prophets, that Inscription, *Of whom the World was not worthy*. Now, altho' there is more of the Anger of Heaven visible in this Dispensation, when there are no Successors to fill up the Vacancies made, or none principled & spirited as their godly Predecessors (no *Samuel* to succeed *Eli*, no *Elisha* to succeed *Elijah*, no *Eleazar* to succeed

ſucceed *Aaron*) yet when there's the greateſt and beſt Supply to be had, even in this Caſe, the Death of faithful Miniſters, eſpecially of very uſeful ones, in their Prime & Vigour, or when capable of ſtill many more years of Service, in the Courſe of Nature, ſeems notwithſtanding to carry in it an Indication of Divine Diſpleaſure, which calls for ſorrowful Reſentments. But alas! how ſeldom is there ſuch a Supply! Eminent Uſefulneſs is the Produce of Time. Hence, altho' GOD raiſes up, among a People, of their Sons for Prophets; yet theſe, of how hopeful a Capacity ſoever, do not uſe preſently to fill up the Breach, and repair the Loſs ſuſtain'd by the fall of holy Men of GOD, who have had many Years of Opportunity for Growth in Grace, and Experience in the Chriſtian Walk, & in the Miniſterial Work. But then how often do's it fall out unhappily, that Men are of a different Spirit and Principles from their wiſe and gracious Predeceſſors! *Eli*'s Sons walked not in his Ways. As one obſerves, "In this Caſe it will commonly happen ſomething as it did to *Rehoboam*, who when the Egyptians had taken away the *golden Shields*, that *Solomon* had made and put into the Temple, was forced to be content with others of a baſer Metal in their room". It was a melancholy Thought to the Apoſtle, Acts 20.29,30. *For I know this, that after my departing ſhall grievous Wolves enter in among you, not ſparing the Flock. Alſo of your own ſelves ſhall Men ariſe, ſpeaking perverſe things, to draw away Diſciples after them.* But thus much for the 2*d* Obſervation.

We may make a few *practical Reflections* here.

Let us now admire the *Grace* & *Condeſcention* of the glorious GOD, in making Uſe of mortal Creatures

Creatures for his Miniſters. Herein he ſtoops to the Infirmities of his People, that he treats with them by Men, ſubject to like Paſſions with themſelves; whoſe Terror ſhall not make them afraid, tho' they ſpeak in GOD's ſtead.

Let Miniſters learn *Humility*, by ſutable Reflections on their dying State. Looking on themſelves as mortal Worms, this may well confound every ſelf-exalting Thought, and ſubdue every proud Paſſion.

Again, Let People learn *Charity* towards their Miniſters; who being in a State of Mortality, muſt needs be in a State of moral Infirmity, and have a juſt Claim to thoſe charitable Indulgences, which the Laws of Chriſtianity require, for human Imperfections.

Again, Are Miniſters mortal? Let us take a thankful Notice of the *ſparing Mercy* of GOD toward us, that in the midſt of our repeated Loſſes, there yet remain ſome of the old Stock of able Miniſters, and that there is the Proſpect of a Succeſſion of faithful Miniſters, as our Fathers go off the Stage.

In a word, As the *ancient* Sett of Miniſters are gather'd home to Chriſt and Heaven, let us be crying to GOD, that the *riſing* Generation of Miniſters, who ſtand up in their room on Earth, may be enabled to *fill up their Places*, and ſpirited to copy after their Example; to follow them wherein they followed Chriſt; and be like Patterns of Devotion, Charity, Purity, Humility, Zeal and Activity to ſupport the Intereſt of Chriſt, and promote the Kingdom of GOD: That his Work mayn't miſcarry in our Hands, and that while the Church triumphant is gaining by their Death, the Church militant may not be

ſo

ſo great a Sufferer; the Loſs being in ſome meaſure repair'd by their Succeſſors.

But I come now to the laſt Obſervation.

Doct. III. *THE deareſt Children and Servants of GOD are liable to* ſudden *Death, even as other Men.*

ELI, the Prieſt, is not the only Inſtance of Death's ſnatching away the Servant of GOD in a very quick & ſurprizing Manner. This is a Diſpenſation common indeed to all Sorts & Ages of Men. Old & Young, Good & Bad have been awful Inſtances of ſudden Death. The deareſt Children & Miniſters of GOD (whoſe Death is precious in his Sight) have been Examples of it. Hiſtory & Obſervation affordvery plentifulProofs.

Impenitent Sinners are perhaps more frequently the Inſtances of ſudden Deſtruction: But we muſt not think that all who die ſuddenly, are of that vile Character, and fall by the hand of revenging Juſtice. Raſh Cenſures in this Caſe muſt with Chriſtian Charity be guarded againſt. For here, as in many other Caſes, *there is one Event to the Righteous, and to the Wicked.* Time and Chance happeneth to them all. For *Man knoweth not his Time*; the Good any more than the Sinner: but as the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the Snare; ſo are the Sons of Men without Diſtinction ſnared in an evil Time, when it *falleth ſuddenly upon them*, *Eccl.* 10.2,11,12. As a Snare, Death often comes upon Men unexpectedly; or as a Thief in the Night, without any foregoing Notices, and makes a quick Diſpatch; ſlaying the *Good*, as well as the Evil Man.

How

How many precious Lives have ſilently been extinguiſh'd in a fainting Fit! How many have died in their Sleep by a Flux of Rheum ſtopping Reſpiration, or by ſome other fatal Diſorder! How many have died of a Quinſy very ſuddenly & ſurprizingly! What Multitudes have been ſwept away in a very ſhort time by a ſpreading Plague! How many have been quickly broken to pieces by violent Fevers; torn to Death with extreme Pains & Convulſions; or chain'd down with Apoplexies, and ſubſiſted but a few days; being even dead in a manner while they liv'd! How many have been ſlain ſuddenly by the hand of Malice, by War, or Perſecution; by accidental Falls, or inevitable Blows; by Shipwrecks; by Fires; and innumerable other Caſualties! Some have been even choak'd with a Hair, and others with a fiſh-bone: Some have been ſtrangl'd with a morſel of Meat, or a draught of Drink: Some have been overcome with Fear, with Surprize, or with Grief, which has drank up their Spirits; And they have died immediately under the violence of the Commotion within them. ---- The Ways & Means can't be number'd, by which Death lays its reſiſtleſs Arreſts upon Mankind, and oft-times in a Moment ſends them out of the World.

And now we might make our humble Inquiry into the Myſtery & Meaning of Providence in the ſudden Death of GOD's Children & Servants. Every ſudden Death is remarkable; and in the Caſe of good Men particularly, calls for a very attentive Conſideration. Indeed it's beyond the Skill and Power of any human Mind, fully to inveſtigate all the general Reaſons, and in every particular Caſe to ſtate the ſpecial Grounds of this

this Dispensation. Yet I shall hint at a few things, that are obvious, and first occur to my Thoughts.

By this Dispensation, in general, undoubtedly GOD designs to give a most bright Display of his *Sovereignty* & absolute Dominion over the Lives of Men. That's the Inscription, in very awful Characters, upon this Dispensation; *Behold, GOD taketh away, and none can hinder!* ——

Herein also God may intend to declare his unspotted *Righteousness*, Impartiality, Purity, and Displeasure at *Sin*, even in his own Children and Servants; as was the Case of *Aaron* ‖, *Moses* ‡, *Eli* *, *Uzzah* †, and the Man of God, whom the *Lion slew by the way* ‖, &c.

Again, It may sometimes be in a way of special *Favour* and Mercy to the Servants of God; and particularly is so, when it comes in Answer to Prayer. It is comparatively a Mercy, when they are call'd home without the Pains & Languishments of a long & pining Sickness; without the Anguish of dying Farewels, & parting Sorrows; and without the Disturbance of those Temptations of Satan, which frequently attend a lingring Death, & make it doubly terrible. When Death finds the Servant of GOD, with his Work finish'd, even all that was given him to do; it finds him by consequence *ready to be offered.* Hence sudden Death, to such an one, is a kind of *Translation.* 'Tis to be look'd upon as a Favour, rather than a Frown, when it finds the Saint in an eminent Readiness for his Change, and is an Answer to his humble Wishes; which

‖ *Numb.* 20. 24. ‡ *Deut.* 32. 50, 51. * 1 *Sam.* 2. 29, 31.
† 2 *Sam.* 6. 7. ‖ 1 *Kin.* 13. 26.

has actually been the Caſe ſometimes. As one obſerves, " Death is a ſort of painful *Operation*, in order to perfect Health and Cure. " Now if a Man has a Leg or an Arm to be cut off, and it muſt be done, the quicker the better. " Every one prays for the Advantage of a quick diſpatch in ſuch a Caſe. " The ſeparation of Soul and Body is a great *Operation*; and when it muſt be perform'd, next to the happy Conſequences of dying well, nothing ſeems more deſirable [on the perſon's own ſingle Account] than ſuch a way of dying as may give him the eaſieſt acceſs to all the Bleſſings of thoſe who die in the Lord". Hence it has ſometimes been the deliberate Deſire of God's Children, if it might be his will, that they might be ſav'd from the miſeries of a ſick bed, & die ſuddenly. Inſtances might be given of ſuch as have ſo died, according to their conſtant Deſire & Preference: Having ſerv'd their Generation, by the Will of GOD, they have ſuddenly fallen a ſleep, and quietly breath'd out their Spirits into the boſom of their dear Redeemer, (ſo died holy *Stephen* Act. 7. 59, 60.) being advanc'd from the Church militant on Earth, by a quick Tranition, to the Church triumphant in Heaven.

But to *go on*,

Other Views and Deſigns of Providence, in theſe ſudden Deaths, may reſpect *Survivors*.

Thus, One Aim of Heaven herein may be to awaken ſurviving *Miniſters*, who perhaps are doing the Work of the Lord too negligently, to give greater Diligence in their Maſter's Service. That's the Language of Providence to them, which was utter'd to *Joſhua* upon the ſudden Death of *Moſes*, (Joſh. 1. 2.) Moſes *my ſervant is dead : now there-*

therefore ariſe ----. Up, and be doing; take heed to your Miniſtry to fulfil it, as thoſe that muſt give an Account. Be ye alſo ready; for ye know not the day nor the hour.

Again, Sometimes GOD may deſign the *Trial* and Improvement of the *Faith* and Patience of his People, more immediately concern'd in theſe ſudden Deaths; and to give them a ſpecial Opportunity for the glorious Operation & Diſcovery of the Grace of GOD in them. For Grace exerciſed in the midſt of Surprize, under a ſudden Bereavement, ſhines out with a diſtinguiſhing Luſtre, and Beauty, to Admiration.

Further, The ſudden Death of GOD's Servants may be deſign'd ſometimes more eſpecially as a *Frown* upon a People, for their not valuing and improving under their Miniſtry, as they ought, or for their carnally idolizing of them. By ſome ſuch Miſcarriages, GOD may be provok'd to bereave a People of their faithful Teachers, in a ſudden & awful manner; that the Death of their Paſtors may the more affect and influence them, and that by the laſting Efficacy of this loud Reproof, ſuch Miſcarriages may be prevented for the future.

Moreover, Providence may deſign by this Diſpenſation, to *revive the Impreſſions* made upon the Minds of any among a People, by the Counſels, Warnings and Inſtructions they have receiv'd from GOD by the Miniſtry of their faithful Paſtors, now ſuddenly taken from them. The ſervant of GOD (as it's ſaid of the Prophet *Abel*) *being dead, yet ſpeaketh*: he remains in ſome ſenſe a lively Preacher to Survivers, by the Memory of his Doctrine & Example. His Death is a ſpeaking Diſpenſation: and the awful Cir-

cumſtance of it's Suddenneſs is very inſtructive and awakning. It teaches a People a Variety of uſeful Leſſons; and is often the means of bringing to Mind ſolemn Admonitions given them by ſuch as have ſpoken to them the good Word of GOD: It ſtirs up pious Reflections, & renews holy Impreſſions formerly made upon them. It affects them to think how ſuddenly GOD has put out the burning & ſhining Light, in which they have been rejoycing for a Seaſon; and that the Place that has known him, muſt now know him no more. It grieves them to think, that they muſt ſee his Face & hear his Voice no more for ever. They are apt to think, it is in Anger they are bereav'd of their faithful Paſtor in this ſudden & fearful manner. They imagine they hear God ſpeaking to him, as to the Prophet *Ezekiel* (Chap. 3. 26.) *I will make thy Tongue cleave to the roof of thy Mouth, that thou ſhalt be dumb, and ſhalt not be to them a* Reprover any longer. And upon this melancholy Occaſion, many of the words they've formerly heard from his gracious Lips, come freſh into Remembrance, & carry a peculiar Force with them to impreſs their thoughtful Minds. When *John Baptiſt* was taken away by a ſudden & ſurprizing Death, his Followers *went and told* JESUS †; and recollecting what they had heard from their Maſter concerning him, made uſe of it now to confirm their Faith in Chriſt. *They ſaid, All things that* John *ſpake of this Man, were true; and many believed on him* ‖. And in the like Caſe, we read, *Theſe things underſtood not Chriſt's Diſciples at the firſt; but when* JESUS *was glorified, then remembred they theſe things.*

† *Mat.* 14. 12. ‖ *Joh.* 10. 41. † *Chap.* 12. 16.

But, to draw to a Cloſe; Another Deſign & View of Providence, in the ſudden Death of GOD's Children & Servants, may be to affect impenitent *Sinners*, who ſurvive, with a deep Senſe of the Divine *Patience* & Forbearance toward them; and ſo by the Goodneſs of GOD to lead them to Repentance: the promoting of which is one main Intention of the Miniſtry. If they who preach & live the Goſpel, are liable to ſudden Death, certainly then ſuch as deſpiſe & reject it, may well expect to be taken away with a Stroke. This Diſpenſation ſerves to convince Sinners more thorowly of their abſolute Dependence upon God, and of their Obligations to his ſparing Mercy. It ſhows them, 'tis not owing to any Worthineſs in them, that they are repriev'd from a miſerable End; but GOD endures with with much Long-ſuffering, & waits to be gracious.

In a word, This Diſpenſation is deſign'd to *warn* & *excite* all Survivers to make Haſte, & not delay, in the great Buſineſs of *preparing* for Death and Eternity. Such ſudden & awful Deaths ſpeak aloud, & cry to the City, yea to the whole Land. The GOD of Hoſts ſpeaketh, as it were in Thunder, to awaken a ſecure World; to rouze up ſleeping Sinners, & ſlumbring Saints: and quicken them to work out their Salvation with fear & trembling; leſt Death coming ſuddenly, ſhould find them unprepared.

But I paſs now to the Application of theſe things. And here,

Use 1. *LET what has been ſaid* reconcile *us the Thoughts of ſudden Death, befalling the Saints and*

and Servants of GOD: *and let us not think ſtrange concerning this Trial, as tho' ſome ſtrange Thing happen'd among us.*

It's no new Caſe, to be laid under the moſt afflictive Bereavements in an unexpected & ſudden manner. 'Tis no uncommon Thing, nor really is it a *Wonder*, when any are ſtruck with ſudden Death. The Wonder is rather, that it happens in no more Inſtances. For, what is our Life? Truly a mere Vapour, a very Bubble, that with any little Accident may break & vaniſh. How fine & curious is the Compoſition of the humane Body! How expos'd to Diſaſters & Diſeaſes innumerable! So that in the moſt vigorous State of Health, our Life may, for ought we know, be *drawing nigh* to the Grave; and there may be *but a Step between us and Death.* O what a wonder is the Continuance of our Lives, thro' ſo long Tracts of Time, amidſt ſo many Shocks & Violences, as we meet with, & amidſt the Varieties of Night & Day, Winter & Summer, Cold & Heat, Storms & Calms! --- There's Death in every thing we taſte; and every Breath we draw, may fetch in ſudden Deſtruction.

When therefore ſudden Deaths happen among us, we need not be afraid with any Amazement: yet GOD is humbly to be ador'd in ſuch Providences. We ſhould take a ſolemn Notice of the Hand of GOD therein; eſpecially when by ſuch ſtrokes we are bereav'd of GOD's Children and Servants, & loſe publick Bleſſings.

We ſhould conſider the wiſe Reaſons of Providence in this Conduct: and let them have their proper Efficacy to ſilence all Murmurs & Objections. We ſhould ſanctify the Lord of Hoſts under ſuch Viſitations, & liſten to the Voice of his

his chaſtning Rod: ſtudy the Meaning of his Controverſy with us, & humble ourſelves under his mighty Hand, in the late repeated Inſtances of the Removal of faithful Miniſters by ſudden Death. Whoſo is wiſe, will obſerve theſe things.

Use 2. *LET us exerciſe a chriſtian* Sympathy *with the particular* Families, *and* Flocks, *more immediately concern'd in theſe awful Diſpenſations.*

We ſhould heartily ſympathiſe with the mourning *Relatives* of the Miniſters of GOD, whoſe ſudden Deceaſe we are this Day lamenting over.

Let us condole the *Widows* Loſſes, who are bereav'd of their affectionate & excellent Conſorts. They have loſt the moſt deſirable & pleaſant Companions; Helpers of their Faith and Joy; with whom they muſt now no more take ſweet Counſel together. ---- The *Children* have loſt very tender and loving Fathers; whoſe wiſe Inſtructions, ſeaſonable Advices and Reproofs, fervent Prayers, and religious Examples, they can no more enjoy. So the other Relations, have loſt very valuable Friends: but now they muſt behold their Perſons no more, and receive their moſt welcome Viſits no more. ---- Let us extend our friendly Compaſſion to the bereav'd Families and Relatives: and lift up a Cry to GOD, that he wou'd ſanctify his awful Viſitations to them; ſupport under theſe ſhocking Bereavements; and furniſh every one with all that Wiſdom & Grace they may need in order to their glorifying GOD in this day of Trouble. Let us pray, that GOD wou'd ſupply the awful Vacancies made in one Family and another, and fill every Relation empty'd by theſe Deaths, with his own Preſence; who lives for ever, to be a Husband to Widows,

and

and a Father to Orphans, a Friend to ſuch as truly ſeek him. I wou'd in particular commend to your chriſtian Pity, the *Daughter* of one of the deceaſed Servants of GOD †, who has long been under a dolefulCaptivity among the Indians, in a popiſh Country, where her *Father* was once the Lord's Priſoner & brave Confeſſor. Pray, that She may be ſav'd from damning Error & Wickedneſs; and that She may be reſtor'd & bro't back to her Father's houſe, if it be the Will of GOD. A Sentence of Death ſeems to be written upon this Deſign, and all Attempts hitherto have been abortive. But nothing is impoſſible with GOD. He can break the Snare; and return the Outcaſt, ready to periſh. He can break the Bars of Iron, and break open the Gates of Braſs. After the thickeſt Darkneſs, comes the Morning-Light. Who knows but that God may repent him of the Evil, and cauſe her yet to ſee Good, and make Light ariſe unto her in Darkneſs? Can a Child of ſo many Prayers and Tears Periſh! ---

Let us alſo ſympathiſe with the bereav'd *Flocks*, who have had their excellent Paſtors taken from their head by ſuch ſudden Strokes. GOD has made a wide Breach upon *Deerfield* and *Beverly*; on theſe two places, in the compaſs of one Week; by taking away their faithful Teachers, both of them by very ſudden ſurpriſing Strokes, ſcarce allowing them the opportunity of a parting Word to their Friends. --- What thoſe Congregations have loſt, many years Experience and Enjoyment can better tell them, than any Words of ours can do.

† Mr. *Williams.*

Only

Only ſuffer me to obſerve to you, that as I have had the Advantage of ſomething a particular Acquaintance with both theſe my Reverend Fathers deceas'd, I have always eſteem'd them very *great Bleſſings* in their Stations; and muſt think, that in their Fall the Publick ſuſtains no little Loſs of Strength & Glory.

They were among thoſe who *ſhine as Lights* in the World, and taught by Example as well as Preaching.

They were ſingular Inſtances of *Piety* toward GOD; of ſincere & fervent Devotion; and had their Converſation much in Heaven. They were to a high degree *weaned from this World*, ſick of its Vanities, and deſirous of a better Country, even an heavenly. They were both of them remarkably ſtrict Obſervers of the *Lord's Day*; and treated the Name of GOD, & divine Things, with a moſt becoming Awe and Reverence. They were Men of great *Faith*; Men of *Prayer*, and knew how to wreſtle with GOD. They bore the Cauſe of Christ and his People much upon their Hearts. They were ardent Lovers of *New-England*; its religious Principles, its Eccleſiaſtical & Civil Rights and Liberties: and have been wont to ſtand in the Gap; trembling for the Ark of GOD.

They were *faithful Stewards*, in the Houſe of GOD; and divided to every one his Portion, in due Seaſon, and in the beſt manner, to nouriſh Souls truly hungry; bringing to them the moſt concerning Goſpel-Truths from time to time; uſing much Plainneſs of Speech, & very affectionate in their preaching; full of ſacred Paſſion, and often weeping, like *Paul*, by the force of a tender Compaſſion to Souls. They pray'd and

preach'd & convers'd, as thoſe that had much of Chriſt in them, and as became the Miniſters of Chriſt; as dying Men, and ſuch as muſt give an Account: Not ſlothful in buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord; willing to ſpend and be ſpent; if by any Means they might ſave themſelves & thoſe which heard them.

They were Men of *Wiſdom*; cautious, circumſpect, and prudent in matters; ſhining with a rare Diſcretion. They were Perſons of an admirable Temper: an *excellent Spirit* was in them, and their Moderation known to all Men. They were, in a meaſure not common, cloth'd with Humility; and Patterns of a commendable Gravity, accompany'd with a viſible Sweetneſs, Serenity, and undiſguis'd Integrity. They were charitable, peaceable and benign: full of Reſpect to Superiors, Condeſcention to Inferiors, & Civility to all: Candid to the Faults of others; patient under Injuries; of a moſt forgiving Spirit, and Haters of Contention. They were hearty and conſtant Friends, faithful Counſellours, ſincere Comforters, and wiſe Reprovers.

I ſhall only add; Under ſome extraordinary (tho' different) Trials & Afflictions, they approv'd themſelves as the Miniſters of GOD, *in much Patience*; ever expreſſing the moſt honorary and adoring Apprehenſions of GOD & his Providence, under the darkeſt Diſpenſations. The Language of holy *Eli* was theirs continually: --- *It is the Lord; let him do what ſeemeth him good.*

Thus they were diſtinguiſh'd by many the moſt excellent Virtues & ſpiritual Endowments; fitted for ſingular Uſefulneſs: and GOD was pleas'd to make them happy Inſtruments of much Glory to his Name, and Good to his People, in their reſpective Stations.

In

In theſe Regards *their Memory is bleſſed.* They were burning Lights: and are now gone out in a ſweet Perfume. They had an extenſive Intereſt in the Hearts & Affections of Men while they liv'd: and their *Departure* is as univerſally lamented.

Alas! That it was ſo ſoon, and ſo *ſudden*! The *Loſs* is the more aggravated to *us*: tho' the *Gain* to them infinite. --- Who had a Thought, when they were in Town a few days ſince, viſiting their Friends, and in appearance having their uſual Health & Vigour, that we ſhou'd ſo quickly hear of their dying out of the World! --- But they were found about their Master's Work: and *Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing.*

I have given you this Account of thoſe Servants of GOD, not as pretending to an exact and complete Character: That wou'd require more Time than I have had for theſe haſty Preparations, and a larger Room than the ſhort Limits of this Lecture will allow me.

I have mention'd theſe Hints concerning them, with a *ſingle Aim* (I truſt) that GOD may have the *Praiſe* of thoſe Gifts & Graces he was pleas'd richly to adorn them with; and that they *being dead*, may *yet ſpeak* to us all by their inſtructive Examples, thus repreſented by one who has been a very happy Witneſs to much of their excellent Character, and is therefore a juſt Debtor to their Memory.

I have ſaid enough to expreſs my own Senſe, and to raiſe others Senſe of the Greatneſs of the Loſſes ſuſtain'd in this double Bereavement; that they may deeply ſympathiſe with the deſolate Congregations. --- O let us mourn their afflicted

Caſe before GOD, and plead with Him on their behalf, for the Mercy & Grace they may need in this day of their Viſitation: That he wou'd ſanctify theſe awful Strokes unto them; that He wou'd teach them to profit by theſe Corrections; and that He wou'd help them to remember thoſe who have ſpoken to them in the Name of the Lord, and to follow their Faith; conſidering the End of their Converſation. Let us alſo pray, that GOD would ſtep into the Breaches made by theſe Deaths, and cloſe them up: That He wou'd over-rule in the important Affair of a new Settlement, to prevent unhappy *Strifes* and Animoſities, and unite his People in the Choice of ſuch to ſucceed in the place of ſpiritual Guides and Overſeers among them as he will own and bleſs, and make like Bleſſings, as thoſe that went before them.

GOD has been thinning the Glory, and impairing the Strength of his People, by multiply'd Breaches upon the Miniſtry, particularly in the removal of our venerable *Aged* Worthies. * The Loſs of ſo many Paſtors in ſo ſhort a time, and in ſo critical a Seaſon, and thoſe of ſuch eminent Character and Uſe in the Churches, beſpeaks our trembling apprehenſions of the Anger of GOD. By theſe Loſſes we are *Weak* this day, very weak. But ſtill *with GOD is the Reſidue of the Spirit*, and he can provide deſtitute Flocks with Paſtors after his own Heart; raiſe up *Eliſha*'s, to ſucceed, on whom ſhall reſt a double portion of the devout and good Spirit, that was in the *Elijahs* now aſcended. Let us pray that it may

* Within the ſpace of a few Months, have dy'd the Reverend Mr. *Solomon Stoddard*, Mr. *Peter Thacher*, Dr. *Cotton Mather*, Mr. *Samuel Danforth*, &c.

be

be ſo; and that GOD will not caſt off his People, nor give them Occaſion for that ſorrowful Complaint, which has been ſometimes uttered, ---- *We ſee not our Signs; there is no more any Prophet among us.* Let us look to the GOD of the Spirits of all Fleſh, and pray that our *Zion* may never want of her *own Sons*, to take her by the hand, and lead her in the way everlaſting.

But I haſten to another head of Application.

Use 3. *THE Word and Providence of GOD call aloud to all in the Miniſtry, to be conſtantly and ſincerely giving ourſelves to the Word and Prayer*; labouring to finiſh the Work aſſign'd us; and conducting ourſelves, as thoſe that know not how *ſoon* or *ſuddenly* their Opportunities may come to a deſperate Period, and their Mouths be finally ſtopt in the duſt.

Our day alſo is coming that we *muſt die*; but we *know n t* the day of our Death. It may be nearer to us than we are aware. And a good Uſe may be made of this Reflection, to ſerve the moſt valuable purpoſes, whether in our more private Life, or publick Work.

This Thought ſhou'd have a powerful Influence upon us, as a Motive to *take Heed to our Selves*, and look to the State and Frame of our own Souls; that we be conſtantly in a readineſs to welcome Death at the ſhorteſt warning. To this End, Let us labour to maintain a daily cloſe Walk with GOD, doing the Duty of every day in its day, and watching againſt the Temptations that every day brings with it. We ſee what need we have to beware, that we don't *entangle ourſelves in the Affairs of this Life*, or

ſuffer

ſuffer the World to engroſs our Thoughts and Cares too much. We ſee what need we have to beware of Falls into Sin, of Decays in Grace, and of Delays to *make our Calling and Election ſure*: Since we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord will call us hence.

Again, This Reflection ſhou'd be a powerful Motive with us to take Heed to our *Families*, and behave ourſelves in every *Relation*, ſo as that tho' Death comes ſuddenly, there may yet be a comfortable parting. In ſpecial it is requir'd of a *Biſhop*, that he *rule well his own houſe, having his Children in Subjection with all Gravity.* And we ſee the need of an early and daily Care in their Education; ſince our Opportunities are ſo uncertain. It was *Eli*'s Folly, that *when his Sons made themſelves vile, he reſtrain'd them not*: for this thing GOD was angry with him, and *cut off the Arm*, which he had not ſtretcht out, as he ſhou'd have done, in governing & reſtraining his Sons.

In fine, The Conſideration of the Uncertainty of our Lives ſhou'd quicken us to take Heed to our *publick Charge*, and to the Miniſtry we've receiv'd in the Lord, that we fulfil it. --- We ſee what need we have to take heed how we behave ourſelves in the Houſe of GOD, and to the Flock of GOD: to watch for Souls as thoſe which muſt give an Account; and to walk in Love, live in Peace, and ſhew all good Fidelity, as thoſe that expect to leave our paſtoral Charges in a little time, and that we may not have an uncomfortable Parting. We had need beware of engaging in angry Controverſies; leſt Death coming ſuddenly, ſhou'd leave no Opportunity for making Peace, & taking an amicable Farewel.

We

We ſee what need we have to beware of ſinful Omiſſions, and unneceſſary Delays of Duty, with regard either to our publick Miniſtrations, or private Labours. We ſee what need we have to be *inſtant*, in Seaſon, and out of Seaſon: and let none of our flying Moments be loſt in Idleneſs or Impertinence. If an Heathen cou'd bravely ſay, *Oportet Imperatorem ſtantem mori*; Surely the Chriſtian Miniſter ſhou'd make it his Deſire and Reſolution to die, *aut precantem, aut prædicantem*; at his Work, engag'd in Prayer or Preaching. Our Saviour's Language well befits the Mouth of the Miniſter of Chriſt, Joh. 9. 4. *I muſt work the works of him that ſent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.* Neceſſity is laid upon us; and Wo to us, if Death coming ſuddenly, *find us ſleeping*." Twas one of our Lord's Commands to his Apoſtles, *Mark* 13. 33. *Take ye Heed; watch, & pray; for ye know not when the Time is.* This is the Language of Providence to us in the late awful Breaches made on the Order of the Miniſtry, in the ſudden Death of one and another. And, I truſt, it is our preſent Concern, that we may have theſe mournful Occaſions ſanctify'd to us for our quickning in our Work, that we alſo may be ready to give up our Account, at a day or an hour's warning. May we be found Followers of them, who thro' faith and patience do inherit the Promiſes! For my own part, as to thoſe Men of GOD, who have lately and ſo ſuddenly left us, if I cou'd but keep their lively Example continually before my Eyes, and imitate the ſame, I ſhou'd hope (by the Grace of GOD) to make full proof of my Miniſtry; and doubt not,

if

if I alſo ſhould die by a ſudden Stroke, I ſhould nevertheleſs finiſh my Courſe with Joy.

Use 4. *LET it be a Word of Caution and Direction to the* People *of our Charge.*

Look upon your Miniſters as dying Creatures, and as ſubject to the Stroke of ſudden Death. Carry this Thought about with you continually: and by the bleſſing of GOD it will have a happy Influence to promote a regular Conduct towards their Perſons, and Improvement under their Miniſtry. You ſee you have need to beware of criminal Neglects, or Delays of Duty toward them; to look to it, that you idolize none, nor deſpiſe any, and that you be not guilty of Unthankfulneſs, Uuprofitableneſs, and carnal Security: but prize your Privilege; Know them that are over you in the Lord; and make what uſe you can of them for your beſt Good, while your uncertain opportunities laſt. That's the Voice of the preſent mournful Bereavements, *Yet a little while is the Light with you: walk, while you have the Light, leſt Darkneſs come upon you.*--- Ceaſe *ye from Man, whoſe Breath is in his Noſtrils.* Look above mortal Teachers, unto Chriſt, who was dead, and is alive, and lives for evermore, to teach and bleſs his People.

But I now conclude with a ſolemn Exhortation unto all, to conſider the *common Hazard* they are in of *ſudden Death*, and to be therefore ſpeedily *preparing* for Eternity. Attend, I beſeech you, to the loud Calls GOD is giving you in his Word and Providence, to get ready to die; leſt that day come upon you unawares. Let ſuch as are in a *ſafe Eſtate*, labour to get into the *beſt Frame*,

Frame, and live in a daily Preparation for Death; that if it ſhould come ſuddenly, it may be no Surprize nor Terror to them. ---- And let Sinners haſten out of the dangerous State they are in; leſt Death coming ſuddenly, ſhould find them in their Sins, and their Life be among the Unclean in the Pit below. If the Children and Servants of God are liable to ſudden Death, and ought therefore to be in a daily Readineſs to die; how much more do's it import Sinners to be getting prepar'd, who have the greateſt Reaſon to fear being taken away with a Stroke! It is a Threatning of God, Prov. 29. 1. *He that being often reproved hardneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy.* This Threatning has been accompliſh'd in very frequent Inſtances. And there's none amongſt all the Sinners in *Zion*, whom the Divine Patience is yet ſparing, but what by their juſt Deſerts lie expos'd to a ſudden Vengeance. O delaying Sinner, be perſuaded to admit ſome ſerious Reflections on the Uncertainty of Life, and the Awfulneſs of Death. Learn to look on thy ſelf as a poor *Spire of Graſs*, liable to be cut down with a haſty Stroke; and *whoſe End is to be burned* and caſt with the Chaff into unquenchable Fire, if not ripen'd & prepar'd by Divine Grace for the heavenly Garner. O thou Fool, *this Night* may thy Soul be requir'd of thee. Some latent Diſeaſe, or unforeſeen Accident, may with a ſudden Blaſt extinguiſh the Lamp of Life in an Inſtant: And Oh! What will become of your Soul, if ſnatch'd away in a State of Impenitence! WO to you, if you *die in your Sins*. Verily, It had been better for you, you had never been born, than to die without having ex-

perienc'd the *new Birth*: For except a Man be *born again*, he *cannot* see the Kingdom of GOD. And will you be so foolish as to trifle in so important an Affair! Will you yet be careless about your Soul & Eternity! Will you venture your everlasting Interests, upon the Uncertainty of a little precarious Breath! O be not guilty of this sottish Stupidity.

ADMIRE the Patience of a good GOD, in thus long reprieving you from Death & Hell: And see you don't abuse it by any further Neglects and Delays; lest he cause your Sun to go down at Noon, and hasten upon you a never-expiring Night of gloomy Sorrow and Despair. Take Warning before it be too late; and to Day, while it is called to Day, fly for Refuge unto JESUS CHRIST, who delivereth us from the Wrath to come. O let all, *Young* as well as *Old*, who indeed are equally incident to a sudden Death, receive the solemn Admonition, with which I now conclude, Jer. 13. 15, 16. *Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give Glory to the Lord your GOD, before he cause Darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark Mountains, & while ye look for Light, he turn it into the shadow of Death, and make it gross Darkness.*

THE END.

ERRATA.

Pag. 5. *lin.* 25. *blot out* They.
P. 20. *l.* 25. *read* Tranlition.
P. 25. *l.* 1. *read*, Let us study.

ADDENDA.

From the Weekly *News-Letter*, No. 130.
And the Weekly *Journal* No. 118.

DEERFIELD, June 16. 1729. On the *12th* Inſtant died here our Reverend & beloved Paſtor, Mr. *John Williams*, in the *65th* year of his Age. The *Lord's Day* preceeding, he preach'd on both parts of the day; tho' he felt himſelf ſomething heavy and indiſpoſed, being but a few days before return'd, from his Journey to *Boſton*. On *Monday*-Morning he was ſiez'd with a fit of the *Apoplexy*. After which we perceiv'd by the Signs he gave on our ſpeaking to him, he had the exerciſe of Reaſon, but never ſpake more than two or three Words. And on *Thurſday* half an hour before One in the Morning he expir'd, to our great Surprize and Diſtreſs, unto whom he was on the beſt Accounts greatly endear'd. On the *Friday* following he was decently interr'd. The Rev. Mr. *Chauncey* of *Hadley* preach'd a *Funeral* Sermon, on the Occaſion.

A very grievous Breach is made, not only upon this *Flock* of CHRIST; but alſo upon this *County* & Neighborhood, ſo ſoon after the Death of the Rev. Mr *Stoddard* of *North-Hampton*. Yea it ought to be reſented as a great and publick Loſs; as a Fall of one of the *Pillars of the Land*.

Mr. *Williams* began his Miniſtry among us in *May* 1686. And was the firſt and only ſetled Paſtor that hath been in this place. GOD who ſent him to us, and inclined his heart to ſettle with us in our ſmall Beginnings, hath made him a great Bleſſing unto us: and we hope thro' Grace he hath left many *Seals* of his Miniſtry among us. He was ſincerely devoted to the Service of CHRIST, who graciouſly endow'd him with very valuable Miniſterial Abilities. He was much in Prayer, and ſingularly gifted in it. He was heartily concern'd for the Intereſt of Religion, and the beſt Good of this People; and a conſtant Interceſſor at the

Throne of Grace for the ſame. From his ardent Care to promote the Honour of CHRIST, and the Salvation of precious Souls, he was *abundant in his Labours, both in Seaſon and out of Seaſon*; plainly, faithfully & frequently charging and inſtructing both *Elder* and *Younger*; affectionately diſpenſing the moſt neceſſary and ſeaſonable Counſels and Warnings to his People; *travelling in birth with them, 'till CHRIST was formed in them.* And adorning the Doctrine of GOD our Saviour in a very circumſpect, holy, & blameleſs Life.

Mr. *Williams* wou'd ſometimes ſay, "It was a dangerous thing to be ſet in the Front of *New-England*'s Sins". — The Divine Providence that fixed his Poſt in one of the *Frontier-Towns* in the Province, fitted him for it by giving him Courage, Patience & Cheerfulneſs of Spirit; ſo that he was wonderfully carried thro' all the difficulties, diſtractions & dangers that he encountred. And his Prayers, Counſels and Example did not a little contribute to the ſupport & encouragement of his People from time to time —. And on that tragical Morning (ever to be remembred by us) *Feb.* 29. 1703,4. when the biggeſt part of the *Town* was ſurprized, and either *Deſtroy'd* or made *Captives*, by the *French* & *Indian* Enemy; of this cup he and his Family drank as deep as any: [Two of his *Children*, and a *Negro Woman*, being *kill'd* on the Spot; Himſelf, and all the Reſt of his Family (except his eldeſt Son, who was abſent from home) made *Priſoners*, and ſoon driven out of the Houſe, for a *March*; wherein firſt his *Negro-Man* and then his dear *Wife* were murder'd by the cruel Salvages.] Under which extraordinary Trials he had much of the Divine Preſence and Supports: GOD wonderfully preſerv'd him, through the Cold & Hardſhips of the dreadful March of 300 Miles thorow the Deſert to *Canada*: and there GOD enabled him to withſtand all the Methods that were us'd to draw or drive him to a Compliance with *Popiſh* Worſhip and Superſtition; and even to yield himſelf an Offering to GOD, when his furious *Indian* Maſter ſtood over him with his Hatchet, threatning preſent Death, if he wou'd not [comply to *Croſs himſelf* and

kiſs

kiss a Crucifix :] His Heart and Courage were ſtrengthen'd, ſo that he ſaid, " *I will ſooner die, than ſin againſt GOD* ". — And *his* Counſels, when he cou'd find opportunity to give them, were greatly ſerviceable to the Strengthning of the other *Captives*.

After Two Years and Eight Months Captivity, he obtain'd *Deliverance*, thro' the good Hand of GOD and the Care of this Government, and arriv'd at *Boſton* on *Nov.* 21. 1706. with 57 Captives, [Two of which were his Children. But a more particular Account of theſe Things may be ſeen in his Book, intitled, *The Redeemed Captive*, &c.] Upon the whole, It was obſervable, that by the Natural Vivacity, Calmneſs and Evenneſs of his Temper, and a gracious Reſignation, his Spirit was kept unbroken, thro' all his ſore Trials. And by the Preſence of Chriſt with him, he came forth as *Gold, Refined* & more *fitted for his Maſter's uſe* : having *Learned Obedience by the things which he ſuffered*.

Not long afterwards, he reſettled at *Deerfield*, willingly returning to his beloved Work and Friends : and continued labouring with them in *all Seaſons*, and amidſt the Difficulties & Troubles that attended ſuch a Frontier-Town by the *Indian* Wars, from time to time. His Preſence among them conduced much to the rebuilding of the Place ; which is now in flouriſhing Circumſtances. And GOD dealt with *him* ſomething after the manner as with *Job* ; opening the hearts of ſeveral worthy *Gentlemen*, as well as his *Relations*, to contribute bountifully to his & his Family's relief ; whoſe Generoſity muſt be principally acknowledged (under GOD) in the *Liberal Education* of his two Elder Sons, beſides many other kindneſſes to his Family.

He was once and again call'd by *Publick Authority*, to ſerve as a *Chaplain*, in the Expedition againſt *Port-Royal* ; and in that deſign'd againſt *Canada*, under General *Hill* & Admiral *Walker*. And to a Winter-Journey to *Canada* with Col. *Stoddard* for the Redemtion of Captives : Which Negotiation ſucceeded as to ſome, but not as to his *own Daughter*, who continues to *this Day* among the *Macqua's*, a ſubject of Pity & Prayer.

He

He was ſecond Son to Deacon *Samuel Williams* of *Roxbury*: Born there *Dec.* 10*th.* 1664. Had his Education at *Harvard-College*, given him by his Honoured and Pious Grandfather Deacon *William Park*. He was twice Married. Firſt to the only Daughter of the Rev. Mr. *Eleazar Mather* firſt Paſtor of *North-Hampton*: The ſecond time to the Daughter of Capt. *Allen* of *Windſor*, (both the Grand-children of the Reverend Mr. *Warham* formerly Paſtor of *Windſor*) who is now his ſorrowful Relict. By the former he was bleſſed with Eleven Children, and Five by the latter: Eight of which only do ſurvive him, *viz.* Four Sons and Four Daughters. His *Three Elder Sons* are worthy *Paſtors* of Churches in *Mansfield*, *Springfield*, and *Watertown*. His eldeſt Daughter Married to Mr. *Meacham* the Paſtor of *Coventry*. His Fourth Son is now at the College in *Cambridge*; who 'tis to be deſir'd may meet with the Kindneſs of Survivors for his Father's ſake.

BEVERLY, June 20. 1729. This Day was interr'd here, the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Blowers* Paſtor of the firſt Church in this place; in the 52*d* Year of his Age, and 28*th* of his Paſtorate. — Son of the late Capt. *Pyam Blowers* of *Cambridge*, & *Eliſabeth* his Wife, Siſter to the late honourable *Andrew Belcher* Eſq; — Born *Aug.* 1. 1677. — Educated at *Harvard-College*, where he took his Maſter's Degree *Anno* 1698. — Ordained to the Paſtoral Office in *Beverly*, *Octob.* 29. 1701. — And finiſhed his Courſe with Joy on Tueſday the 17*th* Inſtant, after a few days Sickneſs and Pain, which made a violent & ſudden Aſſault upon him. He had frequently of late expreſſed an Expectation of Dying very ſpeedily; tho' his ſtate of Health ſeemingly much the ſame as for ſome time before, and without any extraordinary Symptoms upon him. It is worthy of Remark, that on the laſt Sabbath he was abroad (*June* 8.) one of his Sermons

was

was on those words, *Neh.* 10. 39. *We will not forsake the House of our GOD.* — And the other on *Psal.* 10. 14. *The Poor committeth himself unto thee; Thou art the Helper of the Fatherless.* — On Friday following he appear'd more than commonly intent on his Preparations for the Sabbath, studying upon those Words, *Act.* 11. 23. *And exherted them all, that with purpose of Heart they would cleave unto the Lord.* — But still under an Apprehension that he should never Preach the Discourse. For he told his Wife, "The "thought was strangely impress'd upon him, at every "Head he came to, that he should not live to Preach it. — And alas! it happened accordingly. For, on the next Morning he fell Sick of the Sickness whereof he died: And tho' after the first sudden shock of his Distemper, which laid him in a Dying Posture, he had some Revival, for about 2 hours: yet he was for the most part in a manner wholly Speechless, and scarce able but by signs to express his inward Peace and good Hope through Grace.

He has left behind him a good Name, better than precious Ointment, and preferable to great Riches; the Character of a very valuable Man, a good Scholar, and excellent Minister. He was a distinguish'd Example of sincere & warm Devotion; of extensive Goodness, Meekness, and Sweetness of Temper; of great Stability in his Principles, and Steadiness in his Conduct: a very faithful Friend, and obliging Neighbour; a most tender and kind Husband and Father; a vigilant Prudent Pastor, and close Pathetical Preacher; had in great Veneration among the associated Pastors in this Vicinity; highly esteem'd by all his Acquaintance; and universally beloved by his Flock, who much lament their great Loss, and have done him the Honour at his Death, to give him a decent Interment.

He has left a very mournful Widow; with four Sons, and two Daughters: for whom we wish, they may long live to bear up their Father's Name, and inherit his Virtues!

FINIS.

17 N063